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Talking Points on Current Issues
Last Updated: 1/23/08
Drafted by Political Section

BURMA:

Note: POL agreed that since Ambassador John is very well versed on Burma, and as there have been no new talking points from EAP in recent weeks, it would be best to provide bullets from recent statements made by Khalilzad (at UN on Jan 17) and Marciel during his current trip in the region. See below.

Khalilzad

- Our view is that in order for success to be achieved, in order for the credibility of the Council not to be undermined, we need to increase the pressure on the junta
- We need to be prepared to reduce the gap between where things are and where things need to be.
- A policy of both engagement on the one hand through Mr. Gambari and pressure on the other hand, and preparedness to increase the pressure as appropriate, is the right mix for the (Security) Council to adopt.

Marciel

- What's really key is for the entire international community -- China but also ASEAN, Japan, the United States, Europe, India, everyone -- to be sending the same message to the regime that we are not anti-Burma. The international community needs to keep up the pressure on the junta.
- The country is going in the wrong direction, it's having negative effects not only for the Burmese people, but for the region. We all want the country to move in a positive direction
- The regime is absolutely refusing to take any positive steps, either in response to its own people or to the international community. Going back to business as usual isn't an option because the problems, the root causes that led to the protests and the violence in September, haven't been addressed.
- The regime needs to seriously engage in inclusive dialogue, beginning with the release of ASSK and other members of the '88 generation.

REFUGEES:

- The Thailand program for resettling Burmese was the largest US refugee program in the world last year. Over 10,000 entered from

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Thailand, most during last summer. Expect to resettle even more this year.

- Most Burmese resettled to date are ethnic Karen from camps in Tak Province. Anticipate processing Karenni refugees in camps in Mae Hong Son later this year.
- No educational or vocational skill requirements for refugees to be considered for US resettlement. UNHCR forwards names of those interested, DHS interviews to determine if a well-founded fear of return to home country.
- US concerned that 7,800 Lao Hmong in the army camp in Petchabun be properly vetted to identify those with well-founded fear of return. Interview process by RTG closed so far.
- The 152 Lao Hmong confined in the Nong Khai IDC include 90 children. UNHCR-recognized refugees and should not be jailed or forcibly returned to Laos.
- Unlike Burmese, no large scale resettlement program for Lao Hmong planned. US can accept individual referrals of Lao Hmong refugees from UNHCR.
- (IF ASKED) No comment on the US resettlement of North Koreans from Thailand.

CIA SECRET PRISON:

- We do not comment on intelligence matters.

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